

Cheryl A. Verbeke  
1231 Collier Road  
Auburn Hills, Michigan 48326

December 5, 2013

Dear Members of the Financial Liability Reform Committee:

My name is Cheryl Verbeke and I am a Council Person for the City of Auburn Hills. Ten years ago last month, I testified before the House of Education Committee when the Pontiac School District had a request before the voters of the largest bond ever in the State of Michigan. During that time, the School Board was asked to become fiscally responsible by selling vacant land and closed schools, and reducing administrative costs. Instead of listening to this request by the voters, the School Board continued to spend money they didn't have and recently used a loophole to tax residents without asking for a vote from the people. Pontiac School District currently has less than 5,000 students enrolled in their district while West Bloomfield School District has over 15,000 students and their administrative costs are similar. Earlier this year, the School Board was approached by someone willing to purchase one of their vacant school buildings and accompanying land that has been vacant for at least 35 years, but they would not enter into any discussion or negotiation. Instead of being fiscally responsible, the Pontiac School District choose to use a loophole in the law to burden taxpayers with unnecessary costs of the district without the voters being involved.

Ten years ago when I testified I mentioned that I would never send my children to Pontiac Schools and I have not. My husband and I have chosen to do Schools of Choice and we send our four children to Oxford Community Schools. I spend almost two hours a day driving the children to and from school to ensure that they receive a good education. I volunteer a lot at the school and have met a number of families who live in Auburn Hills and Pontiac and are traveling to Oxford every day. When they learn of my involvement as a Councilmember, they ask for me to get involved to fix the Pontiac School District issues. The people in Pontiac I have spoken with are just as upset about this unfair tax as the people who live in Auburn Hills. They don't want to pay taxes for schools they aren't using and neither do we.

We would appreciate your support of SB 442 to eliminate this loophole so that voters have representation to approve or reject issues by voting at a regular election.

Thank you for your consideration. Should you have any questions, please contact me at 248 909 5689.

Sincerely,

Cheryl A. Verbeke  
Council Person, City of Auburn Hills